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Editorial

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Editorial

I am delighted to introduce the **20th edition of the ITB Journal**, the academic journal of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown.

The first paper, by **Arnold Hensman** of the Department of Informatics at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Dublin, is entitled '*Required features of a Virtual Classroom Tool for use in Higher Education*', and discusses an important topic, the integration of virtual-classroom systems into the arsenal of e-learning tools. This integration of virtual-classroom systems represents a major evolution in the landscape of modern distance education. He finds that, for many courses, standard virtual learning environments (VLEs) provide only a foundation upon which to base a distance-learning programme. Hensman notes, importantly, that synchronous live online-teaching software such as Microsoft Office Communicator and Adobe Connect allow educators to simulate a real-time classroom environment over the internet like never before. As these tools are being used more frequently within higher education, Hensman raises serious questions about how effective they ultimately can be in meeting student learning requirements. What are the best practices to employ when conducting classes online in this way? Hensman examines the basic requirements that a virtual classroom tool should meet for higher education purposes with much reference to a variety of commercial brands available. .

In the second paper in this ITB Journal, Dr. **Zari Saeedi T.** of Trinity College Dublin looks at the '*Personality Variable of Self-Esteem and EFL Reading Comprehension*'. She notes that the contribution of psychology to the process of learning, in general, and language learning, in particular, is so pervasive that there is hardly an aspect of language learning and teaching which could not be related to psychology. Among the psychological variables involved in language pedagogy, she finds that personality factors can have great significance. Her study seeks to determine if there is any association between the crucial personality factor of self-esteem (self-concept) (along with the sex variable) and the reading comprehension achievement of English major university students. The findings reveal that the independent variables of self-esteem and sex have a significant effect on students' performance in EFL reading comprehension although their interaction (self-esteem/sex) was not significant.

The paper by **Ciara Browne**, of Trinity College Dublin looks at the structure of the '*Noun Phrase in Bamunka*' as to its linguistic complexity ranging over the semantic, syntactic and morphological interfaces. This paper is the product of significant field research in the Camaroon in Africa and the results were gathered first hand with native informants in the summer of 2010. The language data was collected during a field trip to the Bamunka village in the Ndop plain of Cameroon. The Bamunka language is an understudied language about which very little is actually known. It does not appear to have any reference grammars. The language is a member of the Grassfields Bantu family and the Bamunka language of Western Cameroon is spoken by approximately 31, 000 speakers. With scholars having begun the process of transcribing the language into written form just six years ago, the principles and intricacies of its grammatical system are becoming evident. This paper therefore provides a significant and important contribution to our knowledge of the internal structure of the noun phrase in Bamunka, the grammar of the language, and the distribution of linguistic complexity found therein, within a functional linguistics perspective.

The fourth paper in this issue of the ITB Journal is by **Kelli Slimp**, of Trinity College Dublin, and her paper is called '*Construction Grammar as applied to core English modality*'. This paper applies Construction Grammar to the phenomenon of linguistic modality and she considers both epistemic and root modal verbs of English. Specifically, her paper is concerned with the English verbs CAN/MAY and MUST/SHOULD. Motivation for these choices is provided as well as a brief look at the other types of modal verbs existent in the language. In applying Construction Grammar to modality, the paper poses the following hypotheses: 1) there are varying types of modality in English; 2) these modal variations are realized uniquely and; 3) an accurate and effective account of these unique modalities and corresponding marking systems can be provided within the Construction Grammar (CxG) framework. In order to ascertain these hypotheses, the current study asks 1) what are

the modal variations of English; 2) how are these variations realized and 3) what would a Construction Grammar analysis of modality in English look like? Construction Grammar is applied within the analysis and visually represented in a Role and Reference Grammar-style construction schema. She finds that expressions of modality in English offer as many ambiguous interpretations and unique realizations as there are conversational situations in which they could be uttered. The modality of English is shown to be heavily context and in some cases subject dependant.

The fifth paper, by **Judith Gottschalk** of Ruhr-Universität Bochum, in Germany, is also concerned with linguistic matters, in this case the formation of NOUN-NOUN compounds in German. The title of the paper is '*N + N compounds in German: An analysis within Role and Reference Grammar*'. The paper analyses German N+N compounds consisting of nominal roots [hence N + N compounds] within the theory of Role and Reference Grammar [RRG]. The basis for this analysis of German N+N compounds is the Layered Structure of the Word [LSW] as developed in Nolan (2010). The LSW is analogous to the Layered Structure of the Clause [LSC] and the Layered Structure of the Noun Phrase [LSNP] as they are used in RRG. Besides the description of German N+N compounds, this paper investigates the role of the lexicon, the necessity of a semantic structure of lexemes - based on Pustejovsky's notion of qualia structures (Pustejovsky 1995) - and the use of inheritance hierarchies in a description of inflectional morphology and the use of interfixes. The paper also investigates the use of Constructional Schemas (CSs). With the help of CSs, part of the semantic representations of lexemes is partially based on Pustejovsky's qualia structures, and Gottschalk shows how lexical entries for nouns are constructed. These lexical entries are stored in the lexeme store, which is part of the lexicon.

The final paper of the 20th issue of the ITB Journal is jointly authored by **Dawn Duffin** of National Learning Network Ireland and **Geraldine Gray** of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and is concerned with '*Using learning styles to optimise lecturer and learner experience and results in an Institute of Education*'. The authors find that the past decade of social policy making and legislative change in Ireland has led to a 'broader range of individuals' accessing higher education (ITB, 2006, HEA 2005, Duffin forthcoming). This means that class groups contain a greater range of diversity of learning behaviours than hitherto. The process of accommodating this range of learning behaviours within curriculum development and assessment poses a challenge for lecturers and students alike within Higher Education. This paper proposes an understanding of the relationship of learning styles to cognitive processing and how this can help motivate research-based support for the use of learning styles profiling. It is proposed that the application of learning styles profiling can assist in the creation of conditions for optimal achievement in terms of student retention, attendance and achievement.

We hope that you enjoy the papers in this issue of the ITB Journal.

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